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EDITORIAL.

EDITORS, E. D. COPE AND J. S. KINGSLEY.

AMONG the many uncritical propositions urged by would-be reformers in recent years, few are more so than some of those anent the interesting subject of women's waists. We are repeatedly told that a narrow waist is a deformity produced by artificial compression, and that the just model for the healthy normal woman is the robust and matronly Venus of Milo. Now the anthropologist knows that this general assertion is not true as applied to the civilized white woman. It is especially characteristic of the highest types of woman of the Indo-European race to have wide hips and a narrow waist, up to the age when adipose tissue fills to greater uniformity of outline, the graceful curve which is so generally admired. It is well known that the form of the pelvis differs in the different races, so that in the white race the female pelvis differs from that of the male more than is the case with the African. In the latter the female pelvic strait is as in the male, longer in anteroposterior than in transverse diameter; in the female Mongolian the strait is subquadrate in outline, while in the Indo-European the strait is oval, with the transverse diameter greater than the anteroposterior. Thus the white woman has wider hips than the woman of inferior races, and she is in so far more unlike the male than they. The larger pelvic cavity of the female is an adaptation to the increase in the bulk of its contents incident to gestation; and it follows that when this cavity is not so occupied, the moveable viscera fill the space. From this results the contraction of the abdominal walls immediately above the pelvis known as the waist. It is then clear that the diameter of the waist is inversely as the diameter of the pelvis, and the differential of diameter is greatest as the transverse diameter of the pelvis exceeds the anteroposterior.

The cause of the increased transverse diameter of the Indo-European pelvic strait is probably mechanical. It may be due

to anteroposterior pressure on the pubic arch. This in turn may be a consequence of the monogamic customs of the Indo-European subspecies due to the greater esteem in which women are held. But on this point we can only speculate.

In any case the Venus of Milo has the form of a very mature woman of her race, and many moderns can boast of far more graceful figures than she. And these figures are not the result of artificial compression of the clothing, but are the product of a natural evolution of form. It is true, however, that all women of the white race have not attained this stage, and not a few retain the figure of lower races. It is not, however, proven that the women possessing this figure are any better child-bearers than those of modern type. Occasionally we meet women who to a robust waist add a narrow pelvis,—an unfortunate structure, and one not likely to be extensively reproduced, owing to the difficult parturition which is indicated.

The women who are not satisfied with the figures which nature has given them, and who endeavor to reduce a naturally robust waist to the proportions which characterize their more favored sisters by artificial means, deserve all the reprobation which the above-mentioned reformers bestow so indiscriminatingly on all alike. Excess of slenderness is not beautiful, and artificial compression forces the viscera into positions which produce a deformity of the abdominal wall more repulsive than a stout waist.—C.

—LABORATORIES of Marine Biology have been established at various localities for the purpose of enlarging our knowledge of animal and vegetable structure, development, and function, and to furnish a headquarters for the instruction of the entire community in all matters connected with increased supply, avoidance of disease, and cultivation of more varieties of sea foods.

Some idea of the extent to which the important bearings of Laboratories of Marine Biology are appreciated and encouraged abroad may be gained from the following list, which will make clear at the same time how much America is behind other nations in giving scientific oversight to one side of the question of cheap and plentiful food supply, a question growing in importance in

direct ratio with the growth of population. The first of the laboratories named in the list, that of Naples, has cost, in permanent plant alone, over \$100,000, and is carried on at an annual expense of \$20,000. The laboratory and fittings of the English station, at Plymouth, were completed at a cost of over \$60,000, raised by subscription. The two Austrian and the eight French stations have been fostered by the intelligent and progressive men of their respective countries, and have given abundant returns in practical contributions to knowledge. The Japanese station has, during its few years of existence, done much to alleviate certain sources of public distress. The following list represents the number of such stations and the countries where they are situated: Italy, 1; Austria, 2; France, 8; Holland, 2; Belgium, 1; Germany, 1; Sweden, 2; Great Britain, 5; Russia, 1; Japan, 1; New South Wales, 1. In the United States we have one at Wood's Holl, Mass., and one under charge of the U. S. Fish Commission, at the same place. In the wide range of our Atlantic and Gulf coasts south of Wood's Holl no station exists.

Through the energy of Prof. C. S. Dolley, of the University of Pennsylvania, and the liberality of Mr. Chas. K. Landis, of Vineland, New Jersey, ground has been obtained at Sea Isle City, Cape May County, N. J., and a commodious building has been erected on it to serve as a station for biological research.

The final establishment of the Laboratory of Marine Biology upon the New Jersey coast is the outcome of a long and careful consideration of ways and means, undertaken by the University of Pennsylvania, to ascertain how it could best meet its own needs and the requirements of biologists at large.

To place the laboratory upon the more northerly New England coast necessitated its closure during the winter months on account of climatic conditions.

To have accepted the offers of suitable properties in Florida, or the Bahama Islands, would have necessitated the absence of a number of the university's staff of naturalists during the collegiate year, when their services are particularly needed at home. Comparative inaccessibility applied to either alternative. The decision in favor of the present location of the laboratories is based upon

the fact that the fauna of the New Jersey shore waters and of its numerous bays and thoroughfares is exceedingly rich, uniting to a degree, greater perhaps than any other locality, the northern and southern marine faunas. The plants of New Jersey are also peculiarly interesting from the standpoint of climatology and geographical distribution. New Jersey occupies a central position as regards the great oyster industries of the country, midway between Rhode Island and Virginia. Access is quick and easy to the greatest centers of oyster consumption and distribution, —viz., Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. The desirability of the location is enhanced also from its proximity to three of the greatest intellectual and scientific centers of the country, the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia College, and Johns Hopkins University, enabling the work of the laboratories to be conducted in thorough accord with the university idea, and available to the considerable number of naturalists congregated at these institutions and in the scientific organizations of the three great cities. Ready access to the unsurpassed libraries and collections of these three cities, and particularly to those of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, urged strongly in favor of the present location.

An examination of the U. S. Coast Survey charts will show a gradual widening of the littoral area towards the southern end of New Jersey. This great shoal-water area is the home of myriads of interesting marine animals, and the spawning and feeding grounds of an equally important series of fishes, etc. The numerous bays and the intricate maze of thoroughfares running back through the salt meadows to the mainland are equally interesting from a biological standpoint.

Sea Isle City, situated on Ludlam Island, affords unsurpassed facilities for the utilization of this rich field for investigation. It has direct railroad connection with New York and Philadelphia by numerous fast trains, good harborage for collecting-boats, and Ludlam Bay, with its oyster grounds of several hundred acres, awaiting only the suggestions of the naturalist to replenish them, and counterbalance the short-sighted policy of the oystermen. Sea Isle City is located in an area the hard sand beach of which

shelves in the most gradual manner for a distance of several miles below the sea-level. It is underlaid with a tenacious, black alluvium, representing submerged meadow-land, and from the permanency which this gives it, forms a favorite habitat to mollusks of great number and variety, so much as to have gained the name of "Shell Beach" among the inhabitants of this region.

The scientific staff consists of Professors Dolley (Director), Jayne, Ryder, Wilson, and Cope.

—ATTENTION may be directed to the shortness of the time permitted the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, to be held in Washington, commencing August the 19th. As originally announced it was to have closed on August the 22d, thus covering only four days, of which three may be regarded as working days. It is then succeeded by a two-days' session of the Geological Society of America. By a new arrangement the two societies now overlap their sessions. Equally inexplicable is the proposition to have the papers of foreign geologists read before this society. Is there a scheme on foot to extinguish the congress? or is this only one more illustration of the confusion of geological ideas that naturally emanates from Washington? We are of the opinion that there is no proper reason for a meeting of the Geological Society in the summer. The meeting during the winter holiday seems to satisfy all requirements.

—It is still far from certain that the execution by electric shock is more humane than that by hanging. No detailed report of the recent execution of four men at the New York State prison has been yet made public, and some of those authorized to make it, appear to have a prejudice in favor of this mode of execution. The only details which have been reported so far include two remarkable statements. One is that these men, as was the case with Kemmler, required two discharges to kill them. The other was that the face of the only one of the four men which was seen by an outsider, was seamed with burns, and that a hole was burned in the leg to the bone. That a portion of the dis-

charge passed over or near the surface of the body of Kemmler was stated in the reports, and the similar statement in this case requires explanation. The sentiment of humanity and decency must be satisfied in this matter.

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